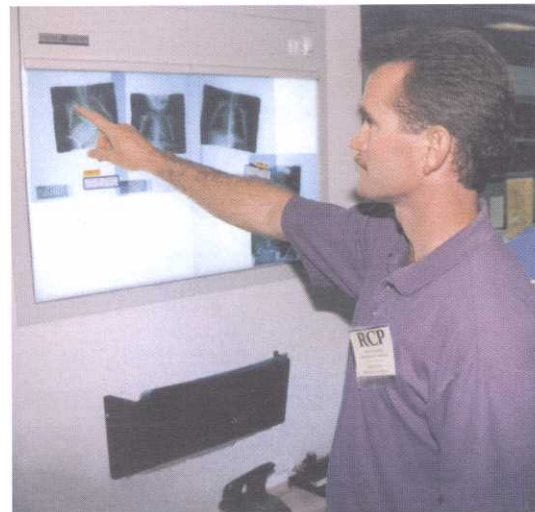


Respiratory Care

A Medical Career Giving a Breath for Life



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April 2002

The Respiratory Care Board of California's mission is to protect and serve the consumer by enforcing the Respiratory Care Practice Act and its regulations, expanding the delivery and availability of services, and promoting the profession by increasing public awareness of respiratory care as a profession and supporting the development and education of all respiratory care practitioners

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Part I. The Role of the Respiratory Care Practitioner

Respiratory Care Practitioners (RCP) are one of three licensed health care professionals who work at patients' bedsides, with the other two being physicians and nurses. RCPs work under the direction of a medical director and specialize in providing evaluation of and treatment to patients with breathing difficulties as a result of heart, lung, and other disorders, as well as providing diagnostic, educational, and rehabilitation services. RCPs are needed in virtually all health care settings.

COMMON HEART AND LUNG DISORDERS TREATED

On a daily basis, Respiratory Care Practitioners (RCPs) provide services to patients ranging from premature infants to the elderly. RCPs provide treatments for patients who have breathing difficulties and care for those who are dependent upon life support and cannot breathe on their own. RCPs treat patients with acute and chronic diseases, trauma victims, and surgery patients. You may know of people that have had one or more of the following diseases or conditions or who have fallen victim to a traumatic accident:

Asthma	Bronchitis	Lung Cancer
Poststroke	Cystic Fibrosis	Infants with Birth Defects
Emphysema	Drowning victims	Heart Attack victims



The RCP is the key health care professional that will provide the needed treatments and services to these types of patients as well as a number of patients suffering from other ailments. RCPs are educated and trained in this very specialized area of medicine.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Respiratory Care Practitioners (RCPs) perform a number of diagnostic, treatment, and life support procedures, including, but not limited to:



- ▶ Employing life support mechanical ventilation for patients who cannot breathe adequately on their own.
- ▶ Administering medications in aerosol form to help alleviate breathing problems and to help prevent respiratory infections.
- ▶ Monitoring equipment and patient responses to therapy.
- ▶ Operating and maintaining various types of highly sophisticated equipment to administer oxygen or to assist with breathing.
- ▶ Obtaining blood specimens and analyzing them to determine levels of oxygen, carbon dioxide, and other gases.
- ▶ Maintaining a patient's artificial airway (i.e. tracheostomy or intubation tube).
- ▶ Measuring the capacity of a patient's lungs to determine if there is impairment.
- ▶ Obtaining and analyzing sputum specimens and chest x-rays.
- ▶ Interpreting data obtained from tests.
- ▶ Assessing vital signs and other indicators of respiratory dysfunction.
- ▶ Performing stress tests and other studies of the cardiopulmonary system.
- ▶ Studying disorders of people with disruptive sleep patterns.
- ▶ Conducting rehabilitation activities.
- ▶ Conducting asthma education and smoking cessation programs.¹

¹ American Association for Respiratory Care Website: www.aarc.org, "What is a Respiratory Therapist?"

HEALTH CARE SETTINGS

Hospitals employ the majority of Respiratory Care Practitioners (RCPs). However, there is a growing number of RCPs being employed in alternative facilities and locations. RCPs may be employed in any of the following settings:



Hospitals	Emergency rooms
Intensive care units	Critical care units
Neonatal (Infant) units	Physicians' offices
Homes	Skilled nursing facilities
Flight transports	Pediatric (child) units
Pulmonary function, rehabilitation, cardiopulmonary, blood gas and sleep laboratories	

Part II. Employment Considerations

CAREER LADDER

The field of respiratory care offers a multitude of career opportunities. In California, a student completing the minimum education requirements and passing the national exam can obtain both California licensure as a Respiratory Care Practitioner (RCP) and National certification as a Certified Respiratory Therapist. With additional education and/or experience, the Respiratory Care Practitioner can continue up the respiratory care ladder and even obtain other certifications and licenses (i.e. dual licensure as a nurse and RCP). Here's one glimpse at the respiratory care career ladder:

Respiratory Care Practitioner (entry level)

After completion of the minimum education requirements (discussed later) and successful completion of the national examination, graduates are eligible for California State licensure. The Respiratory Care Board of California is the State agency charged with licensing Respiratory Care Practitioners.

Certified Respiratory Therapist (entry level)

After completion of the minimum education requirements (discussed later) and successful completion of the national examination, students are eligible for voluntary certification as a Certified Respiratory Therapist. The National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) is a private, nationally recognized organization which provides the Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) credential.

Registered Respiratory Therapist (advanced level)

RCPs holding a CRT credential may advance up the career ladder either by 1) completing the advanced level education program or 2) obtaining added education and experience combined, to become eligible for voluntary credentialing as a Registered Respiratory Therapist. The NBRC provides the Registered Respiratory Therapist credential.

Respiratory Supervisor

Generally, positions at or above this level require the Registered Respiratory Therapist credential.

Respiratory Manager

Generally, all positions at this level and above require the Registered Respiratory Therapist credential. Those therapists with a 4-year degree have a greater likelihood of advancing to this level.

Clinical Coordinator

Generally, all positions at this level require the Registered Respiratory Therapist credential. Many at this level possess a minimum of a 4-year degree.

Educator

Some therapists, with the required credentials advance by becoming student or clinical educators.

SALARIES

Following is data reported in 2000 from The Bureau for National Labor Statistics for salaries of respiratory therapists nationwide:

Certified Respiratory Therapist (entry level)

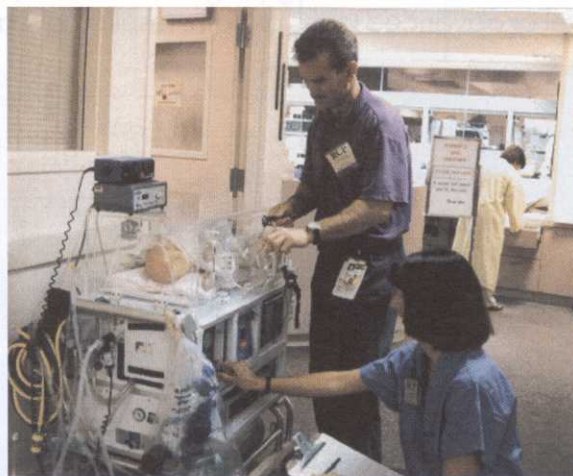
In 2000, median annual earnings of entry level respiratory therapists were \$32,860. The highest 10 percent earned more than \$46,800. ²

In 2002, California programs reported that entry level therapists were earning anywhere from **\$40,000 to \$50,000** annually.

Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT/advanced level)

In 2000, median annual earnings of respiratory therapists were \$37,680. The highest 10 percent earned more than \$50,660. ²

In 2002, California programs reported that advance level therapists were earning anywhere from **\$50,000 to \$65,000** annually.



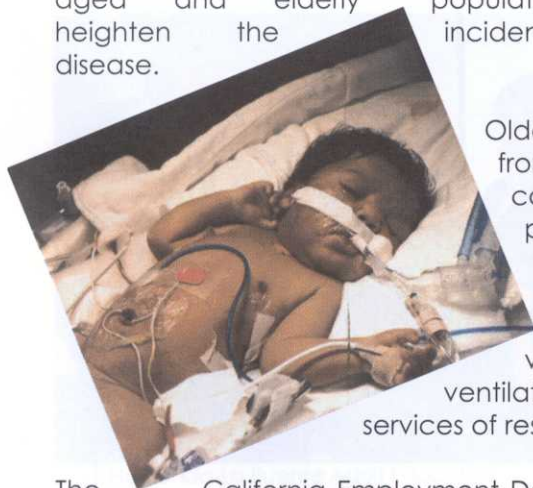
To find out more about salaries in your geographical location you can contact a respiratory care educator (listed on pages 5 and 6) or hospitals in your area.

WORKING CONDITIONS ²

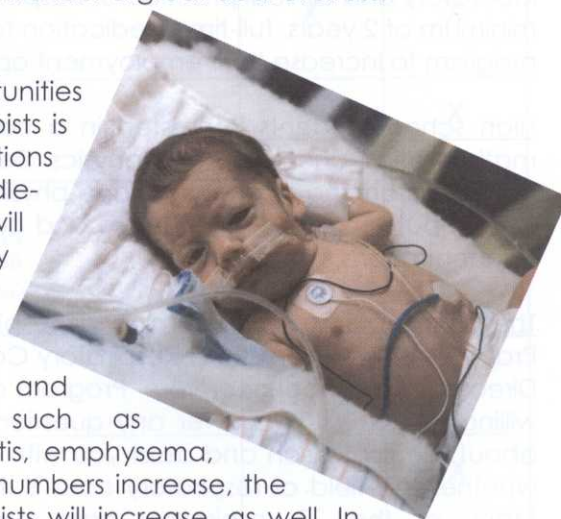
Respiratory therapists generally work between 35 and 40 hours a week. Because hospitals operate around the clock, therapists may work evenings, nights, or weekends. They spend long periods standing and walking between patients' rooms. In an emergency, therapists work under a great deal of stress.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

The National Bureau for Labor Statistics reports that, "job opportunities are expected to remain good. Employment of respiratory therapists is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2010, because of substantial growth of the middle-aged and elderly population—a development that will heighten the incidence of cardiopulmonary disease.



Older Americans suffer most from respiratory ailments and cardiopulmonary diseases such as pneumonia, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and heart disease. As their numbers increase, the need for respiratory therapists will increase, as well. In addition, advances in treating victims of heart attacks, accident victims, and premature infants (many of whom are dependent on a ventilator during part of their treatment) will increase the demand for the services of respiratory care practitioners."



The California Employment Development Department (EDD) reported in 1998 that respiratory care was the 9th fastest growing occupation in the State of California. The EDD projected a 58% increase in respiratory therapy positions from 1998 (with 8,100 positions) to 2008 (with a projected 12,800 positions).

² Source: U.S. Department of Labor

Part III. Three Steps to Becoming a Licensed Respiratory Care Practitioner

EDUCATION

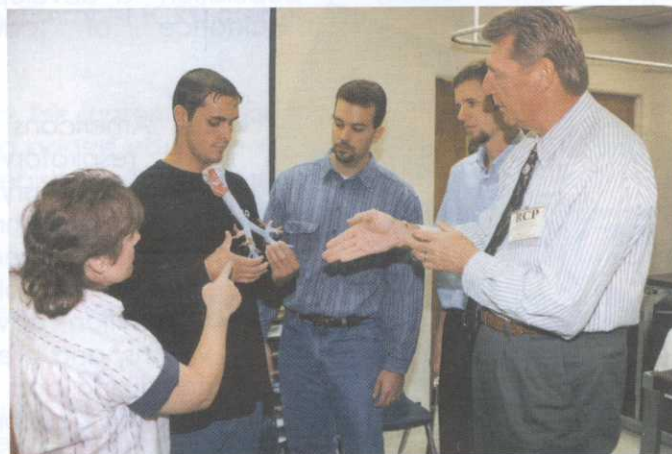
In California, students must meet the minimum education requirements to qualify for licensure as a Respiratory Care Practitioner and for the Certified Respiratory Therapist credential. The minimum education requirements consist of an Associate Degree with the completion of an approved respiratory care educational and training program.³ Currently, there are 27 schools in California that offer either the entry level or advanced level, or both, respiratory care programs (see pages 5 and 6).



Generally, the entry level program consists of 40 to 55 college semester units and the advanced level consists of 45 to 60 college semester units in areas of study for respiratory therapy programs including human anatomy and physiology, chemistry, physics, microbiology, and mathematics plus technical courses dealing with procedures, equipment, and clinical applications. Both programs include courses in laboratory and clinical practice at hospitals and other healthcare facilities. Both program levels take a minimum of 2 years, full-time dedication to complete. Many students opt to enroll in the advanced level program to increase their employment opportunities and their ability to move up the career ladder.

High school students interested in a career in respiratory care should take courses in health, biology, mathematics, chemistry, and physics. Respiratory care involves basic mathematical problem solving and an understanding of chemical and physical principles. For example, respiratory care workers must be able to compute medication dosages and calculate gas concentrations.⁴

The first step toward becoming a Respiratory Care Practitioner is to contact a Respiratory Care Program Director at a school near you. Program directors are willing to discuss or answer any questions you have about the profession and assist you with determining whether the field of respiratory care is right for you. Many of the 27 respiratory care programs are provided at community or state colleges. Some of the following schools may be for-profit institutions. The Respiratory Care Board suggests that you contact more than one school to learn the pros and cons of different programs and institutions.



³ Education requirements actually consist of completion of specific units needed to culminate in an Associate Degree. However, the Respiratory Care Board is currently seeking to clarify education requirements, legislatively, as presented in this brochure.

⁴ Source: U.S. Department of Labor

RESPIRATORY CARE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Institution	Program Director	Entry Level Program	Advanced Level Program
American River College 4700 College Oak Drive Sacramento, CA 95841	James L. Warman, PhD, RRT Telephone: (916) 484-8876 http://www.arc.losrios.cc.ca.us		X
Bryman College 1245 South Winchester San Jose, CA 95128	Victor Tops Fadal, BS, RRT Telephone: (408) 441-6411 http://www.cci.edu	X	
Butte Community College 3536 Butte Campus Drive Oroville, CA 95965-8399	Daniel J. Solomon, MA, RRT Telephone: (530) 895-2423 or 2328 http://www.butte.cc.ca.us		X
California College for Health Sciences 222 W. 24th Street National City, CA 91950	Jeffrey W. Welsh, PhD, RRT Telephone: (619) 477-4800, Ext. 368 http://www.cchs.edu	X	X
California Paramedical & Technical College - Riverside 4550 La Sierra Avenue Riverside, CA 92505-2907	Wayne Walls, BS, RRT, RCP Telephone: (909) 687-9006 http://www.cptc-riverside.com		X
California Paramedical & Technical College - Long Beach 3745 Long Beach Boulevard Long Beach, CA 90807	Jon KeliPuleole, BS, RRT, RCP Telephone: (800) 295-0007		X
ConCorde Career Institute 12412 Victory Boulevard North Hollywood, CA 91606	Marlyn Haberwood, RRT, RCP Telephone: (818) 766-8151, Ext. 121	X	X
Crafton Hills College 11711 Sand Canyon Road Yucaipa, CA 92399	Kenneth R. Bryson, MEd, RRT Telephone: (909) 389-3286 http://www.sbccd.cc.ca.us/chc	X	X
East Los Angeles College 1301 Avenida Cesar Chavez Monterey Park, CA 91754	Michael R. Carr, BA, RRT Telephone: (323) 265-8813 http://www.elac.cc.ca.us		X
El Camino College 16007 Crenshaw Boulevard Torrance, CA 90506	Louis M. Sinopoli, EdD, RRT e-mail: sinopoli@elcamino.cc.ca.us Telephone: (310) 660-3248, Ext. 3248 http://www.elcamino.cc.ca.us/respiratorycare/default.htm		X
Foothill College 12345 El Monte Road Los Altos Hills, CA 94022	Dr. Shirley Treanor Barker Telephone: (650) 949-7292 http://www.foothill.fhda.edu		X
Fresno City College 1101 East University Fresno, CA 93741	Steven Boyd, MS, RRT Telephone: (559) 244-2604 http://www.fcc.cc.ca.us		X
Grossmont College 8800 Grossmont College Drive El Cajon, CA 92020	Lorenda Seibold-Phalan, MA, RCP, RRT Telephone: (619) 644-7448 http://www.grossmont.net		X
Hacienda-La Puente Unified Hacienda-La Puente Adult Education 14101 East Nelson Avenue La Puente, CA 91746	Kevin Booth, AB, RRT, RCP Telephone: (626) 934-2817 or (626) 934-2995 http://www.hlpusd.k12.ca.us	X	
Loma Linda University Nichol Hall, Room 1926 Loma Linda, CA 92350	David Stanton, MS, RPFT, RCP, RRT Telephone: (909) 558-4932 http://www.llu.edu		X

Institution	Program Director	Entry Level Program	Advanced Level Program
Los Angeles Valley College 5800 Fulton Avenue Van Nuys, CA 91401	Virginia Ettinger, MPH, RRT, RCP Telephone: (818) 947-2845 http://www.lavc.cc.ca.us		X
Modesto Junior College 435 College Avenue Modesto, CA 95350	Terry Lyle, MS, RRT, RCP Telephone: (209) 575-6388 http://www.virtual.yosemite.cc.ca.us/lylet/ E-mail: lylet@yosemite.cc.ca.us		X
Mt. San Antonio College 1100 North Grand Avenue Walnut, CA 91789	Terrance M. Krider, BS, RRT Telephone: (909) 594-5611, Ext. 4750 http://www.mtsac.edu		X
Napa Valley College 2277 Napa-Vallejo Highway Napa, CA 94558	Robert S. Chudnofsky, BS, RRT, RCP Telephone: (707) 253-3147 http://www.nvc.cc.ca.us		X
Ohlone College 43600 Mission Boulevard Fremont, CA 94538	Carol McNamee-Cole, MA, RRT Telephone: (510) 659-6029 http://www.ohlone.cc.ca.us		X
Orange Coast College 2701 Fairview Road P.O. Box 5005 Costa Mesa, CA 92628-5005	Daniel S. Adelman, MEd, RRT Telephone: (714) 432-5541 http://www.orangecoastcollege.com E-Mail: dadelman@mail.occ.cccd.edu		X
San Joaquin Valley College 8400 West Mineral King Visalia, CA 93291	Barry Westling, MS, RRT, RPFT Telephone: (559) 651-2500 http://www.sjvc.com		X
San Joaquin Valley College 201 New Stine Road Bakersfield, CA 93309	Jeffrey Cox, AA, RRT, RCP Telephone: (805) 834-0126 http://www.sjvc.com		X
Simi Valley Adult School 3192 Los Angeles Avenue Simi Valley, CA 93065	Christine R. Kingston, BS, RRT Telephone: (805) 579-6262	X	
Skyline College 3300 College Drive San Bruno, CA 94066	Michael Williamson, RRT Telephone: (650) 738-4382 http://www.smccd.net		X
UCLA Medical Center/Santa Monica College Program through East LA College	Melvin A. Welch, Jr., RRT, RCP, MPH Telephone: (310) 434-3463 http://www.smc.edu		X
Victor Valley College 18422 Bear Valley Road Victorville, CA 92392-5849	Larry Boutcher, PhD, RRT, RCP Telephone: (760) 245-4271 x2222 http://www.vvcconline.com		X



Once enrolled in a respiratory care program, your program director or instructors will assist you in obtaining licensure by walking you through the process. Staff at the Respiratory Care Board of California will also be pleased to assist you in completing your application process for licensure.

EXAMINATION

The National Board for Respiratory Care, Inc. (NBRC) is a voluntary health certifying board which evaluates the professional competence of respiratory care practitioners. The Respiratory Care Board of California contracts with the NBRC to utilize its Entry-Level Certified Respiratory Therapist Examination for the purposes of testing minimum competency prior to licensure.

Successful completion of the Entry-Level Certified Respiratory Therapist Examination is required for licensure as a Respiratory Care Practitioner in the State of California and the issuance of the Certified Respiratory Therapist credential from the NBRC.

The Entry-Level Certified Respiratory Therapist Examination is designed to objectively measure essential knowledge, skills and abilities required of entry-level respiratory therapists. The examination consists of 160 multiple-choice questions (140 scored items and 20 pretest items) distributed among three major content areas: clinical data, equipment and therapeutic procedures. Candidates are given three hours to complete the examination. The passage of this examination is currently recognized by every state that certifies or licenses this profession.

Towards the end of your respiratory care program, your instructor will advise and assist you in completing your application for the Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) examination.

LICENSURE

Of the 50 states, 41 require licensure and 3 require certification in order to practice respiratory care. There are only 6 states that do not require licensure or certification to practice respiratory care in their state⁵.

In order to practice respiratory care in the State of California, State law requires that you possess a current and valid license issued by the Respiratory Care Board of California. To qualify for licensure you must meet the Board's education requirements, successfully complete the CRT examination, and pass a criminal background check.



misdemeanor conviction older than two years from the date the application is filed, will not result in the denial of the application. However, for absolute certainty a complete application must be filed and reviewed by the Board).

After the initial license is issued, Respiratory Care Practitioners must renew their license every two years. Part of the renewal process requires RCPs to complete 15 hours of Continuing Education every two years.



The Respiratory Care Board of California is mandated to protect the public from the unauthorized and unqualified practice of respiratory care and from unprofessional conduct by persons licensed to practice respiratory care. As with all licensed health professions in California, background checks are performed by submitting your fingerprints to the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The Respiratory Care Board of California also requires a Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) printout showing your most recent 10 years' of driving history. Though a criminal conviction is grounds to deny an application, the Board takes into consideration several factors including the severity of the crime, the number of crimes, and the length of time that has passed (generally a



⁵ Alabama, Alaska, Hawaii, Michigan, Vermont, and Wyoming do not require state licensure or certification though the CRT and RRT credentials are recognized by health care employers.

Part IV. Additional Resources

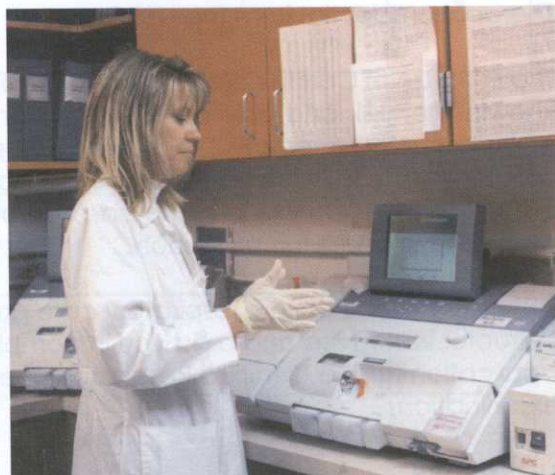
Disclaimer: The following information is provided for your convenience and does not constitute an endorsement.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR RESPIRATORY CARE

American Association for Respiratory Care
11030 Ables Lane, Dallas, TX 75229
Telephone (972) 243-2272
Website: www.aarc.org / E-mail: info@aarc.org

A number of respiratory therapists are members of their national organization, the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC). The AARC has more than 35,000 members in 50 state chapters and three international affiliates.

The AARC represents its members to the media, other organizations, the general public, and the health care industry. Since initiating its coordinated public awareness program, the AARC has become a leader and expert on respiratory care issues recognized by such publications as *USA Today*, *the Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week*, *HealthWeek*, and others in the health and medical media. The Association's "Marketing the RCP" project is increasing the awareness of the value of the respiratory care practitioner in the health care delivery system to hospital administrators, senior management of subacute organizations, medical directors, and other gatekeepers of health care practice.



CALIFORNIA SOCIETY FOR RESPIRATORY CARE

505 North Brand Blvd. - Suite 740, Glendale, CA 91203
Telephone: (818) 247-2053
Website: www.csrc.org
The CSRC is the State association representing respiratory therapists.

THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR RESPIRATORY CARE

8310 Nieman Road, Lenexa, KS 66214-1579
Telephone: (913) 599-4200
Website: www.nbrc.org / E-mail: NBRC-info@nbrc.org
The NBRC is a nationally recognized voluntary health certifying board that provides a number of credentials.



COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION FOR RESPIRATORY CARE

1248 Harwood Road, Bedford, Texas 76021-4244
Telephone: (800) 874-5615
Website: www.coarc.com
CoARC is a subsidiary of the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) and provides the review and recommendations for accreditation of respiratory education programs.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

Postal Square Building, 2 Massachusetts Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20212-0001
Telephone: (202) 691-5200
E-Mail: feedback@bls.gov
Website: www.bls.gov

CALIFORNIA EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

5009 Broadway, Sacramento, CA 95820 / P.O. Box 13140, Sacramento, CA 95813-3140
Telephone: (800) 480-3287
Website: www.edd.ca.gov